FRONTIERS IN EVANGELISM

The Final Frontier

"And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come." Mt. 24:14

In speaking of the end times, Jesus warned His disciples of many terrible things to come: Plagues, famines, wars and earthquakes, to name but a few. In the above verse, however, we see the promise that the gospel would be preached to the whole world before the end would come. No one who reads the newspapers or who watches television can deny that the end is near. All the signs are coming to pass just as Jesus and the prophets predicted. But has the gospel of the kingdom been preached in all the world? Has every group represented in the earth been reached? Well, of course, most folks would say. Christianity can be found on every continent and in every nation to some degree. There's harldy a person alive who hasn't heard the Name of Jesus. But has the gospel been preached? Have all people been told that God's salvation is available to them? I'm afraid not.

Here in our electronic, computerized, TV-evangelized world, there is a group of people who have been entirely neglected and isolated from the love of God. Some small tribe in Africa, perhaps? Australian aborigines? No, this group has members in every nation of the world. 25 million of them live in the United States. They come in all colors, sizes and ages, male and female, from every cultural background. They were ignored by early Christianity, tortured and killed in the Middle Ages, and are often hated and maligned by present day Christians. They have been taught from an early age that God does not love them. These people, Gay men and women, were offered no hope of salvation.

But suddenly, a light has begun to dawn! A new Pentecost has taken place and is continuing even now: God is pouring out His Spirit upon the Gay people! Sweeping aside centuries of men's hatred and tradition, He is saying "I love you" to people who have only heard "I hate you" before. God has called Gay men and women and has given them the charge: "You are my witnesses. Go and tell them I love them. I have ***always*** loved them. Go and bring them in." God is wiping clean lifetimes of pain and rejection, and healing scars ripped open time and again since early childhood. He is pouring in oil and wine to heal the broken hearts. Gay people: "Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God." I Peter 2:10

OPEN ARMS APOSTOLIC
WORSHIP CENTER
P.O. Box 59408
Birmingham, AL 35259
205-939-3804

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WHAT IS

OPEN ARMS APOSTOLIC WORSHIP CENTER?

HISTORY: Open Arms Apostolic Worship Center was founded in 1994 as an Apostolic, Spirit-filled, Bible-believing church serving the people of Birmingham, Alabama. Our purpose is to provide a place where *ALL* people, regardless of sexual orientation, may come together to worship in Spirit and in Truth. Open Arms Apostolic Worship Center is a member of the National Gay Pentecostal Alliance.

DOCTRINE: The Bible is considered the all-sufficient rule of faith. We believe it to be the inspired word of God, and we adhere strictly to its teaching. We believe that there is *one* God, the God of Israel, who took on human form and was born of the virgin Mary. We believe that humanity is sinful by nature and must seek salvation from that sin. We preach the Bible standard of full salvation as found in Acts 2:38: Repentance from sin, water baptism by immersion in the Name of Jesus for the forgiveness of sin, and receiving the baptism of the Holy Ghost, evidenced by speaking in other tongues. (Acts 2:4) We believe in the nine gifts of the Spirit (I Cor. 12:8-10), and in living a holy and moral life. (Deut. 28:9; Is. 35:8-9; Rom. 12:1-2; II Cor. 7:1) We look for the soon return of Jesus to claim His church. Literature is available at no cost to explain the above doctrines in greater detail and to offer scriptural backing for each.

MEMBERSHIP: Membership is open to *all* people of like faith, regardless of race, sex, or sexual orientation. All people are welcome to attend our worship services.

MINISTRY: The Open Arms Apostolic Worship Center is pastored by the Rev. Gerald Adams. Bro. Adams studied for the ministry with Pentecostal Bible Institute of Schenectady, NY. He is licensed as a minister by the National Gay Pentecostal Alliance.

ACTIVITY: The Open Arms Apostolic Worship Center holds regular worship services. The church has a strong desire to share the love of God with others, and has made a commitment to help support new works in other cities.

INFORMATION: For more information or free doctrinal literature, please contact:

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(205) 939-3804

"For God so loved the world,
that He gave His only begotten son,
that whosoever believeth in Him
should not perish, but have
everlasting life."
(John 3:16)

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WHY ARE WE CALLED *APOSTOLIC?*

The word *apostolic* means different things to different people. To some, the word conjures up images of women with long dresses and high hairdos. To others, the word applies to the form of Christianity dominant in Armenia. But what does the word *apostolic* mean to us, and why are we called *apostolic?*

The simplest definition of the word *apostolic* is *like the apostles.* We call ourselves *apostolic* because we try to do everything the way the apostles did. We believe that if the Christian life is worth living, it is worth living correctly. That means living the way the apostles lived, and teaching exactly what they taught, *regardless of what the other churches teach, and regardless of what the church has been doing for the past 1900 years!*

The first century church was apostolic because the apostles were there to teach the truth to people. But after 100 AD, the apostles were gone, and the church was left in the hands of people who thought they knew better than the apostles. These less-than-scrupulous church leaders began to teach things that were not right. Some, such as Montanus (150 AD) began to teach the doctrines of the ancient Babylonian religion, modified to make them fit Christianity. Others taught that the age of miracles was over. The prophecies of Joel in relation to the church (Joel 1:4,5,16) were coming to pass: The church was losing the truth. It wasn't that God was taking the truth away from them. They were simply choosing to throw it away. They decided that their own traditions were of equal value with the word of God, despite the warnings of Jesus. (Mt. 15:8-9; Mark 7:7-9,13)

By the fourth century, the doctrines of Babylon had almost totally replaced the original teachings of the apostles. At the Council of Nicea (325 AD), the Babylonian teachings were made official Christian doctrine, and the few bishops who still taught apostolic truth were excommunicated. Thus began the Dark Ages of the church. But Jesus said that the gates of hell would not prevail against His church. (Mt. 16:18) And Joel, who predicted that the church would lose the truth, also prophesied that God would restore that truth. (Joel 2:23-32) In 1517, Martin Luther was given a revelation of a small piece of truth. The church he eventually founded was not much closer to apostolic truth than the Catholic church he rebelled against, but his revelation was as the first drop of rain in a coming storm.

Over the centuries, that drop of rain has grown to a veritable hurricane as the latter rain of God's Spirit is poured out over the earth. Eighteenth and nineteenth century evangelists began to stress the importance of a personal relationship with God. Then, in the first few moments of 1901, the events of Acts 2:4 were repeated as God poured out His Spirit in Topeka, Kansas. Between 1914 and 1916 further revelations of apostolic truth were given, as God restored the original form and meaning of water baptism to the church. At the same time came the most important revelation of all, a portion of truth lost to the church since the days when Montanus introduced the doctrines of Babylon: The revelation that there is but one God, that is, Jesus Christ.

Today, as the second coming of Jesus draws closer, it is so very important that we stay at the forefront of the ongoing restoration of apostolic truth. The church He returns for will be the one that is following the pattern that He and His apostles laid down (I Cor. 3:10-11). This doesn't mean a denomination, as we understand the term, for God's church knows no denominational names or boundaries. Rather, He will return for those people who have lived according to the teachings of the Bible, regardless of the name hanging over the church door. When He returns, will we be found living according to the teachings of the apostles? Or will we be found wallowing in the traditions of men and the evil doctrines of Babylon? If we truly love God, then we will want to do things His way. And the bottom line is, His way is the only one that works! Truth matters, and that is why we choose to follow the teachings of the apostles.

Buy the truth, and sell it not; also wisdom and instruction and understanding.

Proverbs 22:23

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About Sex . . .

No word captures the attention of the American public quite the way the word "sex" does. Whether the mind is attracted by the prospect, or offended by the thought of promiscuity, almost everyone's eye can be caught by the prominent display of the word "sex."

In addressing the topic of sex from a Christian perspective, it is important for us to be honest and realistic. We must not fall into the puritanical trap of thinking of sex as something hideous and sinful. In fact, there are some people who have been so indoctrinated into that type of mentality, that it is a wonder that they are even capable of reproduction! Nowhere in the Bible is sex depicted as hideous. On the contrary, upon reading the Song of Solomon, it can be seen that sexual activity can be quite beautiful and fulfilling. Our sexuality is a wonderful gift to us from God, intended not only for purposes of reproduction, but even more importantly, intended to forge a powerful bond of intimacy between two people in a committed relationship.

Like any gift, our sexuality has the potential for misuse. Beyond the use of sex as a tool of violence (rape) or control (pederasty), misused sexual activity can hurt people. Even in a consensual relationship between two adults, there is the potential for harm if sexuality is misused. If this were not so, we would not have been given rules instructing us in the proper use of this gift. When these rules are followed, sex is a powerful and fulfilling experience, creating the closest bond two human beings are capable of. When the rules are ignored, sex becomes cheap, people feel used, and the full potential of the gift is lost.

Our church is called Apostolic because we believe in following the example and teaching of the Apostles in every way. This must go beyond matters of doctrine into behavior. If our way of life does not also mirror that of the Apostles, we have failed to be Apostolic. The Apostles of the first century taught a standard of holy living that we don't find mirrored very often in the twentieth century. In a sense, that is to our advantage: Because so few live that kind of holy life, when we do live it, our light will shine that much brighter.

The scriptures teach only one standard of behavior. Although the passages of scripture we will be looking at seem to address only heterosexual couples, no separate standard was included for homosexual couples, and therefore the one standard must apply to all. (We believe that the scriptures in their original languages do not condemn homosexuality, in spite of the teachings of many Christians today. If the reader needs help understanding this, he or she is urged to contact the church and someone will offer assistance.)

There was a time when all branches of Christianity taught a high standard of sexual morality. Sometimes this went too far. There are almost no Shakers left today, because they taught that there should be no sexual activity of any kind. They are dying out because they do not reproduce. Obviously, the scriptures don't teach such enforced abstinence. Other groups, such as the Puritans, tended to view all sex as evil, even in the marriage bed, but did not abstain from it. In many denominations, sexual activity was seen to be a means of reproduction only, and was to be shunned if reproduction was not the intention. Scripture doesn't teach that, either.

In the twentieth century came the sexual revolution. Although this is almost universally viewed as evil by churches, it did have some positive effects. For the first time, America as a whole "came out of the closet." Americans learned what other Americans had been doing all along, but had never dared to tell. The most important benefit of this was increased education. The ignorance of years past was appalling. This writer's mother received no sex education at home, other than being told that she should not use tampons (which her mother called "candles.") While on the surface that may seem amusing, it is actually tragic. She was taught nothing else, and had no idea what to expect when she began to date, and later married. But her mother was hardly to blame; she'd had even less sex education. She didn't learn until she was more than fifty years old that there was a direct connection between sexual intercourse and pregnancy! Such ignorance seems impossible to us today, and yet apparently was not uncommon at one time.

The writer's mother passed on her heritage of no information. Although she is a vocal opponent of sex education in the schools, she was incapable of providing such information herself. The usual "questions children ask" were not answered, and, like countless generations before, this writer was left to find out about sex on his own.

The sexual revolution did much to do away with sexual ignorance. Unfortunately, it also did away with sexual morality. Many churches stopped teaching any concept of it, and began to teach that sexual activity between

edgement was made. This is why Joseph, who had not yet had a wedding ceremony, would have had to divorce Mary, rather than just cancel the wedding. (Matthew 1:18,19) Even though no ceremony had taken place, no contract had been signed, and no sexual activity had taken place, they were morally bound together, because they had made a commitment to each other.

Many couples today do not have wedding ceremonies or licenses, but live together all their lives in love and fidelity. Are they living in sin? Not according to the biblical definition of marriage. If they have made a commitment of love and faithfulness to each other, then, in the eyes of God, they are indeed married. (The government may disagree, but the scripture gives the government no authority to regulate marriages.)

What is the purpose of a wedding ceremony, if the marriage already exists? It is simply a way of publicly acknowledging the relationship that already exists. It does not make that relationship more "binding," for indeed, it should already be so. Although we encourage couples to have such a ceremony to share their commitment with loved ones, it is by no means required by scripture. We will perform such ceremonies for heterosexual and homosexual couples. Heterosexual couples are encouraged to obtain a marriage license, but this is not required by scripture, either. We will not perform a ceremony for a couple if either partner is married to someone else.

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P. O. Box 59408

Birmingham, AL 35259

205-939-3804

Apostolic . . . Because Truth Matters.

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Worship The Lord in The Beauty of Holiness.

I Chronicles 16:29b

What is holiness? Do we need it? These are questions frequently asked in parts of the church world today. Let's look at the second question first: Do we need holiness? What does the Bible say?

"Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." II Cor. 7:1

". . . put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." Eph. 4:24

"For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness." I Thess. 4:7

"Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." Hebrews 12:14

"But as He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy, for I am holy." I Peter 1:15-16

As we can see from the scripture, holiness is something that is expected of the Christian, and in fact, is absolutely essential if we expect to see the Lord (Heb. 12:14). But what is holiness?

Some branches of Christianity have no concept of holiness, and never use the word at all. It's not that they have no code of behavior, or standard of right and wrong. Rather, they are still in the Old Testament mode of thinking, using the ten commandments as their standard of behavior. Their concept of right and wrong is guided by the words **THOU SHALT NOT.**

Other forms of Christianity, even some that have an understanding of apostolic truth, have been misguided when it comes to apostolic holiness. They have come to equate the word holiness with a prescribed standard of dress, activity and behavior. It isn't possible to attend their churches for any period of time without learning that the members of those churches have a strictly enforced dress code, a list of social activities they are to shun, and a list of behaviors they may not engage in. Once again, the concept of holiness is being guided by the words **THOU SHALT NOT.**

One of the greatest dangers inherent in **THOU SHALT NOT** thinking is the tendency to overlook the heart. We may find people who are dressed according to the prescribed standard, and whose behavior never deviates from the expected norm. But what about their hearts? If they are filled with bitterness and anger and hatred, are they then holy? The Bible says no. They are simply modern day replicas of the first century Pharisees, whose outward appearance and behavior were perfect, but whose hearts were bound in sin. Jesus compared them to the mausoleums in the cemetery: They are clean and beautiful on the outside, but what is inside is dead and rotting. (Mt. 23:27-28)

How, then, can we know what holiness is? If we cannot use **THOU SHALT NOT** as a guide, what can we use? **THOU SHALT NOT,** the *"ten commandments mentality,"* was fine in the Old Testament. Under the Law of Moses, everything was written down as right or wrong. Such matters were not left up to people to decide. In the New Testament, we are no longer under the Law of Moses. Jesus fulfilled the Law, and replaced the covenant of Law with one of Grace. What does that mean for us? May we do anything we please? No, of course not. There is still such a thing as right or wrong. But the Christian is supposed to have the Spirit of God living inside. The Spirit is our guide into all truth (John 16:13). Part of that truth is knowing how to live in a way that is appropriate for a people professing holiness.

We will best learn what it means to be holy when we put away the **THOU SHALT NOT** mentality taught in so many churches. With what shall we replace it? Let's look to the Bible again:

"And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord is One: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: This is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these." Mk. 12:29-31; Mt. 22:37-39

"On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." Mt. 22:40

"So then every one of us shall give account of *himself* to God. Let us not therefore judge one another anymore:

can very easily make your Christian testimony of no effect.

What about dress? Is there a specific way God's people should dress? Some churches have prescribed dress codes. There is one denomination that insists that women must wear white blouses and black skirts below the knee. Their men must wear suits and ties. Even visitors to their church are expected to conform to that standard. Anyone not dressed that way would be asked to sit in the back row, or might not be allowed in at all! The Bible describes such behavior as sin: James 2:1-6

Other churches have specific codes about types of clothing, forbidding women to wear pants. They also prescribe hair length for their followers. The Old Testament makes reference to women not being permitted to wear the clothing of a man, and vice versa (Deut. 22:5). If translated correctly from Hebrew, however, the message of this verse is somewhat different. It says that a woman may not put on the *k'li* of a man. *K'li* is a Hebrew word which means tool, weapon, or utensil. It does *not* mean garment or clothing. The verse goes on to say that a man may not put on a woman's garment. But there's an added shade of meaning lost in the translation. This verse forbids a man to put on a garment that actually *belongs* to a woman. It says nothing about, for example, a man wearing a garment designed for a woman, but not actually *owned* by one.

I Corinthians chapter eleven talks about hair length. It's the only place in the Bible that specifies proper hair length. Are we expected to follow its rules? Can we take these verses and formulate a doctrine? According to scripture, we must have two or three witnesses in agreement in order for something to be binding. (Num. 35:30; Deut. 17:6; Mt. 18:16; John 8:17; II Cor. 13:1; I Tim. 5:19; Heb. 10:28) I Corinthians chapter eleven stands alone. With no other witnesses, it cannot be imposed on the church. Paul taught that custom *only* to the Corinthian church, and *only* because their previous custom of cutting off their hair for a burnt sacrifice to the goddess Diana was evil. He taught them the ancient Jewish custom of hair length to replace their evil custom. He imposed it on no one else.

The only request the scriptures of the New Testament make of us in regard to dress is modesty. Modesty has two aspects: First, it means that the Christian should be properly covered. Although no "rules" are written down for this, we discourage certain things. Most Christian women would never dream of going outdoors without a top on. But the average Christian man would never think twice about it. This is discouraged. It has nothing to do with the concept of avoiding double standards. Rather, it is because of the effect it has on other people. If a woman walked down the street topless, the effect on heterosexual men and homosexual women can easily be understood. But a topless man has exactly the same effect on heterosexual women and homosexual men. Now, I'm not suggesting that the Christian is responsible for the thoughts and lusts of other people. But why put a stumblingblock in front of others, especially non-Christians who would be weaker and more prone to sin? Or why put a stumblingblock before new Christians who are also weak? This isn't a "law" or "rule." It's just a suggestion.

The other aspect of modesty has to do with exaggerating appearances. I can't find any place in the Bible where makeup is forbidden. But a person who puts on excessive amounts is not being modest. Makeup can be used to enhance appearance somewhat, but it should not be used to disguise or completely alter appearance. Moderation, as in all things like this, is the key to makeup. If it is used, it should not be used in excess. The same is true of jewelry. The Bible does not forbid it, but warns against relying on jewelry to create one's appearance. And honestly, who can listen to you witnessing if you're wearing so much jewelry that you rattle when you walk? The same principles extend to hairstyles. The Christian should avoid overly elaborate hairstyles that call undue attention to themselves, such as elaborate braiding and weaving, outlandish colors, etc. Also to be avoided are hairdos so huge that the person sitting behind you can't even see the ceiling, let alone the pulpit. Are these things sin? Probably not. But they're weights to carry.

You'll find that the Apostolic church doesn't have a whole lot of **THOU SHALT NOT.** Nevertheless, Apostolic people are encouraged to drop every weight that would hold them back, and to avoid any behavior that would ruin their testimony and make their witnessing of no effect. Holiness isn't an overnight accomplishment. Rather, it's a lifetime process of growth and maturation. Little by little, God will show us things we don't need in our lives anymore, weights we can drop by the wayside. And then, when we're willing to drop those weights, He gives us the strength and courage to do so. It's unlikely your pastor will stand in the pulpit and preach a **THOU SHALT NOT** message. Instead, your pastor will teach you holiness by *example.* And truthfully, his or her own example is the most powerful sermon any pastor can preach. Your own life can be the same type of powerful sermon to the world when you learn to drop the weights that hold you back.

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An Apostolic Church
Teaching Apostolic Truth

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